TL5677

EAST TIMOR: NGO DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION

2nd draft 8.4.99

a. Rationale

It is widely agreed that there is an urgent need for better coordination of NGOs involved in development assistance in East Timor. The need is particularly urgent now as international donors mobilise in response to new emergencies and opportunities associated with East Timor's changing political fortunes. Coordination of political advocacy is well established internationally and is not addressed in this proposal.

East Timorese NGOs appreciate the support and solidarity of overseas agencies and believe continuing support of all kinds is vital for sustainable development in East Timor.

But East Timorese also strongly believe that this external assistance must be coordinated to ensure that it is properly targeted, empowers local NGOs and the community and is appropriate to East Timor's development needs. Local NGOs are appealing for better mechanisms of international coordination and are working on developing coordinating mechanisms within East Timor. Coordination must also extend to dealings with bilateral and multilateral donors who will want to consult with and support NGOs, particularly in the interim period before government structures are in place.

The advantages of coordination need to be emphasised. Coordinated assistance is informed, planned, inclusive, transparent and accountable assistance. Good coordination will assist and enhance the efforts of external donors, not tie them up in bureaucracy. Good coordination will also respect the diverse mandates, roles and contributions of agencies, not least local NGOs in East Timor. Uncoordinated assistance will be ill-informed and unplanned. It has the potential, at one extreme, to duplicate effort and, at the other, to leave gaps. Uncoordinated assistance has the potential to bypass local NGOs, to introduce competition and division, and to weaken rather than empower civil society in East Timor.

The situation of East Timorese NGOs needs to be appreciated. First, they are working in a complex, tense, volatile and rapidly evolving political environment. Second, development problems abound. They face many demands in the field, including emergencies involving many thousands of displaced people. Third, local NGOs are newly formed and still weak in capacity and experience. Fourth, they fear they will be swamped by a massive inflow of assistance and unable to cope. Fifth, they point to a constant flow of government and NGO visitors coming to Dili seeking information and advice and offering assistance, in addition to similar approaches by telephone, fax and email. They observe that many of these visitors ask the same questions, offer the same type of assistance as other donors and do not appear to have consulted with colleagues abroad. Uncoordinated donor interest has the potential to add to rather than relieve the situation of local NGOs.

b. Needs

Coordination is needed in the key areas of (1) information (2) international linkages.

1. *INFORMATION SHARING*

The following information services will be supplied from a number of sources. Coordination is necessary to ensure they are available to a range of users. Data will generally be available internally or on request.

1.1 An accessible, centralised data base of available studies and reports on all aspects of development in East Timor or at least a listing of these reports and how to find them. A number already exist or are in the pipeline: CNRT, FAFO/Columbia, UNICEF?, Oxfam, Timor Studies Group, AusAID Project Identification Mission plus the papers and outcomes of the Strategic Planning Conference. No doubt there are others. In some cases they need translating.

1.2 An inventory of East Timorese skills and qualifications relevant to development, both in the diaspora and internally, with relevant contact details, availability (as volunteers or consultants). Work is underway: OSB is preparing an audit of East Timorese in Australia, Alberto Araujo in Portugal, University of East Timor in East Timor.

1.3 A register of non-Timorese personnel with expertise relevant to current needs in East Timor and current contact details, language skills, availability (as volunteers or consultants). In Australia, work is underway through OSB and AEU (teachers). Skilled personnel in the Asian region should also be registered.

1.4 A data base of relevant East Timorese NGOs. There are about 12 now. Oxfam has prepared an inventory.

1.5 A data base of non-East Timorese NGOs working in East Timor or considering involvement. Available from Oxfam.

1.6 An inventory of aid projects, sector by sector, currently underway or planned in East Timor. Available from Oxfam.

1.7 A listing of actual and potential donors plus profiles and contact details.

2. *COORDINATION OF EXISTING MECHANISMS*

Coordination mechanisms for development are needed: (1) within East Timor (2) between East Timor and external NGOs (3) amongst the wider NGO community and (4) between NGOs and the official donor community. The following sections map what is already in place but which would benefit from further coordination.

2.1 Existing coordination within East Timor.

The key to effective overall coordination lies in the development and strengthening of coordinating mechanisms in East Timor. Two emerging coordinating mechanisms are being developed, namely Posko Dili and the East Timor NGO Coordinating Forum.

a. Posko Dili. Posko Dili was established at a planning meeting of 35 representatives from local NGOs, church groups, representatives from refugee communities, students and volunteers, held in Dili, 24-27 March 1999. CAA, ICRC, CARE and Indonesian NGOs were also present.Posko's purpose is to coordinate the humanitarian response to internally displaced peoples in East Timor. It does not have a wider mandate at this point. The Posko secretariat is based at Yayasan Hak (Tel 62 390 323 214) which will provide administrative support. Posko coordinator is Jose Luis de Oliveira.

b. EastTimor NGOs Coordinating Forum. The Forum was originally formed to coordinate responses to the drought and served as a loose network comprising the Red Cross, Care, Caritas, AusAID. The Forum is currently a coordinating body for 12 NGOs. Oxfam has obtained funds from the British Government to assist with infrastructure, staffing and program.

The Forum could possibly serve as the basis for a full coordinating mechanism in East Timor but this is a matter for the East Timorese to decide and advise on.

2.2 Existing national and regional coordination

Following is a map of known key NGO development coordination mechanisms outside East Timor:

- *Portugal*: Portuguese Platform of Development NGOs (ONGD). The Platform comprises 52 NGOs of which 10 are supporting or considering supporting projects in East Timor.
- *Canada:* the Canadian Council of International Cooperation (CCIC) has recently established an East Timor Working Group.
- *USA:* CRS has an office in Jakarta and projects in East Timor. More enquiries are needed to ETAN and Interaction.
- *Asia:* APCET. Regional bodies such as Asia-Pacific Facilitating Team, Arena, ACFOD, and Forum Asia need to be considered.
- *Indonesia:* possibly INFID. Check with East Timorese groups and Galuh.
- *Australia:* ACFOA East Timor Working Group
- *New Zealand:* active agencies are Corso, Oxfam and CWS. Corso also relates to NFIP.
- *Ireland:* enquiries to be made.
- *Britain:* Interagency Group for East Timor, comprising Oxfam, CIIR, CAFOD each of which has its own international networks.
- *France*: MSF, MDM, CCFD. Enquiries to be made.
- *Scandinavia:* enquiries to be made.
- *Japan:* JANNI? Enquiries to be made with Japanese Coalition for a Free East Timor.
- *Brazil:* enquiries to be made.

c. A new mechanism for international coordination

Ideally international coordination should be provided from East Timor but this is not possible in the current circumstances due to resource and political constraints. Until this is possible, a two part coordination mechanism is proposed. When circumstances permit this two part arrangement will be consolidated in East Timor thereby allowing coordination from Dili through a number of international liaison points. To facilitate this, it is recommended that institution strengthening support is provided in Dili as part of the coordination building strategy.

Two part coordination

4.1 East Timor

Arrangements in Dili should be decided on by the East Timorese NGO community. It is proposed, however, that the East Timorese NGOs establish a coordinating secretariat in Dili based on the existing East Timor NGOs Coordinating Forum.

4.2 International

It is proposed that an international liaison office be established overseas to work in cooperation with the Dili mechanism.

a. *Location:* Australia or another country. If in Australia, it is proposed that the International Liaison Office be based on the existing ACFOA East Timor Working Group and that an international liaison role be added to its domestic mandate.

b. *Role:* liaison with Dili office, provision/referral of information (see 'information' section above), facilitation of communication, liaison with CNRT, liaison with national/regional NGO networks, liaison with bi-lateral and multilateral donors.

c. *Partnership:* to ensure close cooperation between the two offices, it is recommended that an international liaison officer be appointed to work in the Dili office. This person's role will be to monitor the situation in East Timor and to liaise with the international office in support of its external coordination role. This person might also have an institution strengthening role in the Dili structure.

d. *Governance:* steering committee.

e. *Staff:* depends on where it is. If in Australia at ACFOA, one staff person (half or full time) would be needed, preferably an East Timorese with appropriate background, language etc.

f. *Budget:* donors will have to be approached to meet salary and other costs.

Both offices will liaise with official donors. It is noted that this requires particular skills and that more will be required of NGOs in this area until a government structure is in place in East Timor.